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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
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Thesis

THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON  
AS EXPRESSED IN HIS POETRY

by

Marion Renfrew  
(A.B., Radcliffe, 1908)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

1934

A.E.R.

ROBERTS UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

1979

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

AS A RESULT OF THIS STUDY

WILLIAM H. HARRIS

(1979, 1980, 1981)

RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTS OF

TEACHING ON THE STUDENT

WILLIAM H. HARRIS

1979



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THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON  
AS EXPRESSED IN HIS POETRY

"The state of American poetry during the closing years of the last century," writes Ben Ray Redman in his EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON, "was neither satisfactory, exciting, nor promising."<sup>1</sup> He quotes from Carl and Mark Van Doren, "There were, indeed, numerous writers of verse who had some reputation, but the public was right in feeling that these were minor poets, earnest or dainty survivors from more energetic days. No one of them had been shaped by the great national struggles of the past century and no one of them gave voice to the newer national ideals which were demanding expression. For the most part, they were content to sing pretty songs about remote emotions or to argue in meter about established ideas."<sup>2</sup> Robinson himself alludes to the work of these poets as "songs without souls,"<sup>3</sup> and cries:

"Shall not there one arise  
To wrench one banner from the western skies,  
And mark it with his name forevermore?"<sup>4</sup>

He himself seems to be the answer to his own question. He has lived and written in a century marked not only by a national, but by an international, upheaval. His work, far from being "songs without souls," bears the impress of his time. His "reading of life and character,"<sup>4</sup> moreover, is of such virility and universality that, according to Charles Cestre, it is destined to last for ages.

1. Page 26.      3. E. A. Robinson: Collected Poems, PAGE 93

2. Ibid, Page 27.      4. Cestre: Introduction to  
Edwin Arlington Robinson,  
Page 6







Though nearly forty years have elapsed between the publication of his first work in 1896 and that of his last in 1933, the strands of thought apparent in the earliest poems are manifest in all that follow. Of that first little volume, THE TORRENT AND THE NIGHT BEFORE, The Bookman for February, 1897 makes mention as follows: "There is true fire in his verse, and there are the swing and the singing of wind and wave and the passion of human emotion in his lines; but his limitations are vital. His humor is of a grim sort, and the world is not beautiful to him, but a prison-house. In the night-time there is weeping and sorrow, and joy does not come in the morning."<sup>1</sup> Robinson's reply is editorially recorded in The Bookman for March, 1897:

"Mr. E. A. Robinson writes thanking us for the 'unexpected notice' of his book of poems called THE TORRENT AND THE NIGHT BEFORE in these columns in the February Bookman. Mr. Robinson adds: 'I am sorry to learn that I have painted myself in such lugubrious colors. The world is not a "prison-house," but a kind of spiritual kindergarten, where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks.'"<sup>2</sup>

"What is the meaning of life? Or is life worth the living?" are the questions, according to Redman, asked again and again in Robinson's poetry. "Individual case after individual case he examines with sympathetic patience; constantly he searches his own soul and cons the faith of

1. Ben Ray Redman: Edwin Arlington Robinson: page 32  
 2. Ibid., page 33

3. Ibid., page 34



Though nearly forty years have elapsed between the publication of his first work in 1836 and that of his last in 1893, the strands of thought apparent in the earliest poems are manifest in all that follow. Of that first little volume, THE TOWER AND THE NIGHT BIRD, the Boothman for February, 1897, makes mention as follows: "There is true life in his verse, and there are the wing and the singing of wind and wave and the passion of human emotion in his lines; but his limitations are vital. His power is of a strict sort, and the world is not beautiful to him, but a prison-house. In the night-time there is weeping and sorrow, and joy does not come in the morning."<sup>1</sup> Robinson's reply is characteristically recorded in the Boothman for March, 1897:

"Mr. F. A. Robinson writes thanking me for the 'quoted notice' of his book of poems called THE TOWER AND THE NIGHT BIRD. In that column is the February Boothman. Mr. Robinson adds: 'I am sorry to learn that I have painted myself in such lugubrious colors. The world is not a 'prison-house', but a kind of spiritual kindergarten, where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks.'"

"What is the meaning of life? Or is life worth the living?" are the questions, according to Robman, asked again and again in Robinson's poetry. "Individualism after individualism has he examined with systematic persistence; consistently he searched his own soul and came the latter of



all men for an answer, but judgment at the last must be withheld. And so he cannot reply to that lesser question which is but part of the greater one: What is success and what is failure? The apparent 'failures' of the world obsess him, but constantly he repeats that he can pass no judgment. With his spiritual kindergarten he will not presume to spell God or any of God's patterns. But with the eternal patience of the philosopher he must constantly arrange and rearrange these blocks according to the inspiration of the artist." <sup>1</sup>

Again: "The conflict in the poet's mind is crystal clear, and its mechanism quite familiar. The clash arises from the measureless discrepancy between life experienced and life desired; the forces involved are chilling reason and warming faith, each impotent to conquer wholly, each incapable of complete surrender." <sup>2</sup>

THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT, published in 1897, contains the poems which appeared in the earlier volume as well as some others. In the very title poem there is sufficient to refute the idea that Robinson looks upon life as a prison-house. Some of us, he admits, may be but Children of the Night, living only in darkness.

"For those that never know the light  
The darkness is a sullen thing,  
And they, the Children of the Night,  
Seem lost in Fortune's winnowing." <sup>3</sup>

Life holds little promise for such.

1. Ben Ray Redman: Edwin Arlington Robinson, page 34
2. Ibid., page 17      3. The Children of the Night, page 11



all men for an answer, but judgment at the last must be withheld. And so he cannot reply to those who question what is his part of the answer only: that is, evidence and what is his part? The answer is: "I know not," of the world of things, but constantly he repeats that he can give no judgment. With his spiritual kingdom then he will not proceed to speak too far of God's part. But with the eternal patience of the philosopher he must constantly sit up and wait for those things according to the instruction of the world.

Again: "The conflict in the poet's mind is a spiritual effort, and its resolution quite final. The great crisis from the unconscious disintegration between life experienced and life desired; the forces involved are conflicting reason and emotion; faith, each important to conquer wholly, each susceptible of complete surrender."

"THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT," published in 1894, containing the poems which appeared in the earlier volume as well as some others. In the very title poem there is evidence to suggest the idea that Robinson looks upon life as a prison-house. Some of us, he writes, may be but children of the night, living only in dreams.

"For those that never knew the light  
The darkness is a alien thing,  
And they, the children of the night,  
Have lost a fortune's winning."

Life holds little promise for such.



" 'T were better ere the sun go down,  
Upon the first day we embark  
In life's imbittered sea to drown  
Than sail forever in the dark." 1

Yet we need not remain in this darkness.

"Let us, the Children of the Night,  
Put off the cloak that hides the scar,  
Let us be Children of the Light  
And tell the ages what we are." 2

In CREDO the idea of the Light is thus repeated:

"I cannot find my way; there is no star  
In all the shrouded heavens anywhere;  
And there is not a whisper in the air  
Of any living voice but one so far  
That I can hear it only as a bar  
Of lost, imperial music, played when fair  
And angel fingers wove, and unaware,  
Dead leaves to garlands where no roses are.  
No, there is not a glimmer, nor a call,  
For one who welcomes, welcomes when he fears,  
The black and awful chaos of the night;  
For through it all--above, beyond it all--  
I know the far-sent message of the years,  
I feel the coming glory of the Light!" 3

In THE ALTAR the bewilderment resulting from the surrounding night is blended with the same faith in the Light.

"Alone, remote, not witting where I went,  
I found an altar builded in a dream--  
A fiery place, whereof there was a gleam  
So swift, so searching, and so eloquent  
Of upward promise, that love's murmur, blent  
With sorrow's warning, gave but a supreme  
Unending impulse to that human stream  
Whose flood was all for the flame's fury bent.

"Alas! I said--the world is in the wrong.  
But the same quenchless fever of unrest  
That thrilled the foremost of that martyred throng  
Thrilled me, and I awoke--and was the same  
Bewildered insect plunging for the flame  
That burns, and must burn somehow for the best." 4

The idea of the Light, which is the guide of life, is

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. The Children of the Night, page 11 | 3. Collected                                  |
| 2. Ibid, page 12                      | 4. Collected Poems, Poems, page 94<br>page 92 |



"I were better ere the sun go down,  
Upon the first day we embark  
In life's hazardous sea to brown  
Than sail forever in the dark."

Yet we need not remain in this darkness,

"Let us, the Children of the Night,  
Put off the cloak that hides the scar,  
Let us be Children of the Light,  
And tell the ages what we are."

In ORDRE the issue of the light is thus revealed:

"I cannot find my way; there is no star  
In all the shadowed heavens anywhere;  
And there is not a whisper in the air  
Of any living voice but one as far  
As I can hear it only in a far  
Of I see, immortal truth, I find when torn  
The angel's voice, and answer,  
And I have to explain to those who  
No, there is no glimmer, not a gleam,  
For one who knows, wisdom, truth and love,  
The light and will of the light;  
For through it all--above, beyond it all--  
I know the latest message of the year,  
I feel the coming glory of the light!"

In THE DARK the bewilderment resulting from the con-

foundered night is blended with the same faith in the light.

"Alone, remote, not fitting where I went,  
I found an altar builded in a dream--  
A fiery place, whereof there was a gleam  
So white, so searching, and so eloquent  
Of upward promise, that love's misty, blind  
With narrow's turning, gave but a glimpse  
Unending impulse to that human strain  
Whose flood--all for the flame's true bent.

"Alas! I said--the world is in the wrong,  
But the same purposeless fever of unrest  
That thrilled the forenoon of that last year through  
Thrilled me, and I knew--and was the same  
Bewildered insect clanking for the flame  
That burns, and must burn somehow for the best."

The idea of the light, which is the guide of life, is



variously interpreted in other poems. Sometimes it would seem to be self-reliance and individualism, as in THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT:

"So let us in ourselves revere  
The Self which is the Universe"; 1

and in OCTAVE XVII:

"To you that sit with Sorrow like chained slaves,  
And wonder if the night will never come,  
I would say this! The night will never come,  
And sorrow is not always. But my words  
Are not enough; your eyes are not enough;  
The soul itself must insulate the Real;  
Or ever you do cherish in this life--  
In this life or any life--repose." 2

In the following it is faith in God:

"When we can all so excellently give  
The meaning of love's wisdom with a blow--  
Why can we not in turn receive it so,  
And end this murmur for the life we live?  
And when we do so frantically strive  
To win strange faith, why do we shun to know  
That in love's elemental over-glow  
God's wholesomeness gleams with light superlative?

"Oh, brother men, if you have eyes at all,  
Look at a branch, a bird, a child, a rose--  
Or anything God ever made that grows--  
Nor let the smallest vision of it slip,  
Till you can read, as on Belshazzar's wall,  
The glory of eternal partnership." 3

In THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT and in OCTAVE XXII God is described as a God of justice and of love:

"And if God be God, He is just;  
.....  
And if God be God, He is love." 4

"Forebodings are the fiends of Recreance.  
The master of the moment, the clear seer  
Of ages, too securely scans what is  
Ever to be appalled at what is not;

1. The Children of the Night, page 12
2. Collected Poems, page 105
3. Collected Poems, page 96
4. Children of the Night, page 12



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seem to be self-reliance and individualism, as in THE

# CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT:

"So I let us in ourselves reverse  
The Self which is the Universe"; I

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"To you that sit with sorrow like chained slaves,  
And wonder if the night will ever come,  
I would say this! The night will never come,  
And sorrow is not always. But my words  
Are not enough; your eyes are not enough;  
The soul itself must illuminate the Soul;  
Or ever you do cherish in this life--  
In this life or any life--traces." 2

In the following it is said in God:

"When we can all so excellently give  
The meaning of love, a wisdom with a glow--  
Why can we not in turn receive it so,  
And add this wisdom for the life we live?  
And when we do so transitionally strive  
To win strange faith, why do we shrink to know  
That in love's elemental over-glow  
God's wholeness means with light superlatives?

"Oh, brother men, if you have eyes at all,  
Look at a branch, a bird, a child, a rose--  
Or anything God ever made that grows--  
Nor let the smallest vision of it slip,  
Till you can read, as on Behazar's wall,  
The glory of eternal patterns." 3

In THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT and in OCTAVE XXII, God  
is described as a God of justice and of love:

"And if God be God, He is just;  
.....  
And if God be God, He is love." 4

"Forebodings are the friends of Resurrection.  
The master of the moment, the older seer  
Of ages, too accurately sees what is  
Ever to be appalled at what is not;

1. The Children of the Night, page 12
2. Collected Poems, page 105
3. Collected Poems, page 98
4. Children of the Night, page 12



He sees beyond the groaning borough lines  
Of Hell, God's highways, gleaming, and he knows  
That Love's complete communion is the end  
Of anguish to the liberated man." 1

Again, the Light is identified with Wisdom:

"Here by the windy docks I stand alone,  
But yet companioned. There the vessel goes,  
And there my friend goes with it, but the wake  
That mills and ebbs between that friend and me  
Love's earnest is of Life's all-purposeful  
And all-triumphant sailing, when the ships  
Of wisdom loose their fretful chains and swing  
Forever from the crumbled wharves of Time." 2

It is also identified with Thought:

"There is one battle-field whereon we fall  
Triumphant and unconquered, but alas!  
We are too fleshly fearful of ourselves  
To fight there till our days are whirled and blurred  
By sorrow, and the ministering wheels  
Of anguish take us eastward, where the clouds  
Of human gloom are lost against the gleam  
That shines of Thought's impenetrable mail"; 3

with Knowledge:

"When we shall hear no more the cradle-songs  
Of ages--when the timeless hymns of Love  
Defeat them and outsound them--we shall know  
The rapture of the large release which all  
Right science comprehends, and we shall read,  
With unoppressed and unoffended eyes,  
That record of All-Soul whereon God writes  
In everlasting runes the truth of Him"; 4

and with Truth:

"Like a white wall whereon forever breaks  
Unsatisfied the tumult of green seas,  
Man's un conjectured godliness rebukes  
With its imperial silence the lost waves  
Of insufficient grief. This mortal surge  
That bears against us now is nothing else  
Than plangent ignorance. Truth neither shakes  
Nor wavers, but the world shakes, and we shriek." 5

These themes of Thought, Wisdom, and Truth recur in

1. Collected Poems, page 105  
2. <sup>1</sup>bid., page 107  
3. Ibid., page 102

4. Ibid., page 102  
5. Ibid., page 106



He sees beyond the growing, towering lines  
Of Hell, God's highways, lightning, and he knows  
That love's communion is the end  
Of anguish to the liberated man." 1

Again, the light is identified with Wisdom:

"Here by the windy hook I stand alone,  
But yet accompanied. There the vessel goes,  
And that my friend goes with it, but the way  
That wills and obeys between that friend and I  
Love's earnest is of life's all-purposeful  
And all-irresistible sailing, when the ship  
Of wisdom looks the first of stars and sailing  
Forever from the crumbled wharves of Time." 2

It is also identified with Thought:

"There is one battle-field whereon we fall  
Triumphant and unconquered, but alas!  
We are too fleshly fearful of ourselves  
To fight there till our eyes are whirled and blurred  
By sorrow, and the ministering wheels  
Of anguish take us westward, where the clouds  
Of human gloom are lost against the gleam  
That shines of Thought's immeasurable sail." 3

with Knowledge:

"When we shall hear no more the cradle-songs  
Of ages--when the timeless hours of love  
Cleave them and outsound them--we shall know  
The rapture of the large release which all  
Right science comprehends, and we shall tread  
With unoppressed and unoffended eyes,  
That record of All-Soul whom God writes  
In everlasting times the truth of Him." 4

and with Truth:

"Like a white wall whereon forever breaks  
Unstilled the tumult of green seas,  
Man's unoppressed godliness rebukes  
With its imperial silence the lost waves  
Of insufficient grief. This mortal surge  
That bears against us now is nothing less  
Than rampant ignorance. Truth neither shakes  
Nor waves, but the world shakes, and we strike." 5

These themes of Thought, Wisdom, and Truth recur in

1. Collected Poems, page 105
2. Ibid., page 107
3. Ibid., page 108
4. Ibid., page 105
5. Ibid., page 106



THE GARDEN and in the octaves beginning, "There is no loneliness--no matter where," and "The guerdon of new childhood is repose." In one poem only do we find a note of sheer pessimism:

"Still through the dusk of dead, black-legended,  
And unremunerative years we search  
To get where life begins, and still we groan  
Because we do not find the living spark  
Where no spark ever was; and thus we die,  
Still searching, like poor old astronomers  
Who totter off to bed and go to sleep,  
To dream of untriangulated stars." 1

This is counteracted in the notable octave which implies that the less cause we have for faith in anything that is of the earth, the more we may trust the Light above and beyond earth.

"When one that you and I had all but sworn  
To be the purest thing God ever made  
Bewilders us until at last it seems  
An angel has come back restigmatized--  
Faith wavers, and we wonder what there is  
On earth to make us faithful any more,  
But never are quite wise enough to know  
The wisdom there is in that wonderment." 2

We cannot now understand, but let us have courage to believe that some day we surely shall. This thought is elaborated in KOSMOS:

"Think of it, all ye millions that have planned,  
And only planned, all ye builders on the sand,  
Whose works are down!--Is love so small, forsooth?  
Be brave! Tomorrow you will understand  
The doubt, the pain, the triumph, and the Truth." 3

For though we grope now among our perplexities, we shall by them be strengthened for something better. This idea is developed in the following poem:

1. Collected Poems, page 103

2. Ibid., page 103

3. Children of the Night, page 43



THE GARDEN and in the octave beginning, "There is no loneliness--no matter where," and "The garden of my childhood is remote." In one poem only do we find a note of cheer

occasional:

"Still through the dusk of dead, black-legended  
And unresponsive years we search  
To find where life began, and still we grow  
Because we do not find the living spark  
Where it began; ever we die, and then we die,  
Still searching, like poor old astronomers  
Who totter off to bed and go to sleep,  
To dream of unimagined stars." I

This is counteracted in the notable octave which implies that the last verses we have for faith in anything that is of the earth, the more we may trust the light above and beyond earth.

"When one that you and I had all but sworn  
To be the truest friend, God ever made  
Betrayed us until at last it seems  
An angel has come back refigured--  
Faith wavers, and we wonder what there is  
On earth to make us believe any more,  
But never the quite wise enough to know  
The wisdom there is in that moment."

We cannot now understand, but let us have courage to believe that some day we surely shall. This thought is also

expressed in ROMANCES:

"Think of it, all ye millions that have planned,  
And only planned, all ye builders on the sand,  
Whose works are done!--is love so small, forgotten?  
Be brave! Tomorrow you will understand  
The heart, the pain, the triumph, and the truth."

For though we grope now among our perplexities, we shall  
then be strengthened for something better. This idea is developed in the following poem:



"Not by the grief that stuns and overwhelms  
 All outward recognition of revealed  
 And righteous omnipresence are the days  
 Of most of us affrighted and diseased,  
 But rather by the common snarls of life  
 That come to test us and to strengthen us  
 In this prentice-age of discontent,  
 Rebelliousness, faint-heartedness, and shame." 1

Thus in his first publication Robinson has revealed his belief in the power of an inner Light, identified variously with Self, Faith in God, Wisdom, Knowledge, Thought, and Truth. Furthermore, he has sounded the note of courage which is the concomitant of faith in the Light.

In this volume, too, occur a few of the character studies which Robinson is constantly making in his effort to discover the effect which the presence or absence of the Light in men has on their lives. From the every-day walks of life he examines John Evereldown,<sup>2</sup> who follows "the women wherever they call"; Luke Havergal,<sup>3</sup> who contemplates suicide to join his lost love"; Richard Cory,<sup>4</sup> who "fluttered pulses when he said 'Good morning,' and "glittered when he walked," yet

"Went home and put a bullet through his head";  
 and Aaron Stark,<sup>5</sup> the miser,

"Cursed and unkempt, shrewd, shrivelled and morose."  
 All these are examples of men not guided by any Light.

Robinson turns also to the pages of history. He extols Zola,<sup>6</sup> because he dared to see "the human heart of God"; Verlaine,<sup>7</sup> because the "good in him is living after the evil is dead"; George Crabbe,<sup>8</sup> because he had the "sure strength that fearless truth endows"; and Thomas Hood,<sup>9</sup> who cloaked

1. Children of the Night, page 36

2. Collected Poems, page 73

3. Ibid., page 74

4. Ibid., page 82

5. Ibid., page 86

6. Ibid., page 85

7. Ibid., page 96

8. Ibid., page 94

9. Ibid., page 91



"Not by the gift that came and overcame  
 All outward recognition of revealed  
 And righteous conscience are the days  
 Of most of us enlightened and blessed,  
 But rather by the common share of life  
 That comes to each as he is strengthened  
 In this primitive of his nature,  
 Rebellion, faithfulness, and shame." I

Thus in his first chapter Robinson has revealed

his belief in the power of an inner light, identified various-  
 ly with Self, Faith in God, Wisdom, Knowledge, Thought, and  
 Truth. Furthermore, he has sounded the note of courage which  
 is the concomitant of Faith in the light.

In this volume, too, occur a few of the character stud-  
 ies which Robinson has constantly making in his effort to dis-  
 cover the effect which the presence or absence of the light  
 has had on their lives. From the every-day walks of life  
 he examines John Everedson,<sup>1</sup> who follows "the woman wherever  
 they call"; Luke Haverhill,<sup>2</sup> who contemplates suicide to join  
 his lost love; Richard Cory,<sup>3</sup> who "listened unless when  
 he said 'Good morning,' and 'afternoon when he walked,' yet  
 "next door and put a velvet cushion his head";

and Aaron Stark,<sup>4</sup> the miser,  
 "Cursed and unwanted, shrewd, shrewd and scorned."  
 All these are examples of men not guided by any light.

Robinson turns also to the pages of history. He extols  
 John,<sup>5</sup> because he dared to see "the woman part of God";  
 Verelaine,<sup>6</sup> because the good in him is living after the evil  
 is dead; George Crabbe,<sup>7</sup> because he had the "true strength  
 that teaches truth enow"; and Thomas Hood,<sup>8</sup> who showed

1. Chapter of the Night, page 30  
 2. Collected Poems, page 73  
 3. Ibid., page 74  
 4. Ibid., page 82  
 5. Ibid., page 83  
 6. Ibid., page 84  
 7. Ibid., page 85  
 8. Ibid., page 86



the anguish of his life with pleasantries. In all of these Robinson finds the Light burning.

In CALVARY we have the first of those historical portraits which show the wide gulf which separates the great leader who walks fearlessly in the illumination of his own great Light and the world, ever eager to belittle or crucify him.

"Friendless and faint, with martyred steps and slow  
Faint for the flesh, but for the spirit free  
Stung by the mob that came to see the show,  
The Master toiled along to Calvary;  
We gibed him, as he went, with houndish glee,  
Till his dimmed eyes for us did overflow;  
We cursed his vengeless hands thrice wretchedly,--  
And this was nineteen hundred years ago.

"But after nineteen hundred years the shame  
Still clings, and we have not made good the loss  
That outraged faith has entered in his name.  
Ah, when shall come love's courage to be strong!  
Tell me, O Lord--tell me, O Lord, how long  
Are we to keep Christ writhing on the cross!"<sup>1</sup>

The title poem, CAPTAIN CRAIG, of Robinson's second volume, published in 1903, continues the study of humanity. The subject, Captain Craig, is an outcast of fortune, in whom, however, the divine spark burns bright.

"I doubt if ten men in all Tilbury Town  
Had ever shaken hands with Captain Craig,  
Or called him by his name, or looked at him  
So curiously, or so concernedly,  
As they had looked at ashes; but a few--  
Say five or six of us--had found somehow  
The spark in him, and we had fanned it there,  
Choked under, like a jest in Holy Writ,  
By Tilbury prudence." <sup>2</sup>

Conventional religion was letting the Captain starve.

1. Collected Poems, page 83
2. Ibid., page 113



the surplus of his life with pleasure. In all of these  
Routledge finds the light shining.  
In CALVARY we have the first of those historical por-  
traits which show the side which separates the great  
leader who walks fearlessly in the illumination of his own  
great light and the world, ever eager to believe or disbelieve.

And this one started hundred years ago.  
We cannot see the various hands which were working,  
Till his other eyes for us did overflow;  
We find him, as he went, with burning eyes,  
To the last bold shout to Calvary;  
Gone by the way that came to see the show,  
Faint for the light, but for the world's free  
Victorious and faint, with martyr's steps and slow

And after nineteen hundred years the same  
Still shines, and we have not made good the loss  
That during a little time entered in his name.  
Ah, when shall come that hour, to be desired,  
Tell me, O Lord—tell me, O Lord, how long  
At we to keep Christ waiting on the cross?

The title page, CAPTAIN CRAIG, of Robinson's second vol-  
ume, published in 1905, contains the study of personality. The  
subject, Captain Craig, is an account of fortune, in which,  
however, the divine spark burns bright.

I should like to see all of Timothy Town  
But ever shake hands with Captain Craig.  
Or called him by his name, or look at him  
So curiously, or so conscientiously,  
As that I had looked at a man; but a few—  
Say five or six of us—had found somehow  
The spark in him, and we had found it there.  
Checked and, like a star in holy writ,  
By Timothy Robinson's pen.

Conventional religion was leaving the Captain's statue.



"There were no men to blame.  
 There was just a false note in the Tilbury tune,  
 A note that able-bodied men might sound  
 Hosannas on while Captain Craig lay quiet.  
 They might have made him sing by feeding him  
 Till he should march again, but probably  
 Such yielding would have jeopardized the rhythm.  
 They found it more melodious to shout  
 Right on, with unmolested adoration,  
 To keep the tune as it had always been,  
 To trust in God and let the Captain starve." 1

Captain Craig says that at his death men will have no more to say of him than that he was a humorist. Such a judgment to him is no disgrace, because he considers humor an attribute of the divine. "God's humor," he says, "is the music of the spheres," and those who quiver and clutch "for something larger, something unfulfilled, some wiser kind of joy," will never have it until they "learn to laugh with God."

Robinson implies that Captain Craig's humor is akin to God's. How, then, shall we define this humor? It seems to be, first, a fine sense of proportion, which enables men to distinguish what is base and worthless in life from what is divine. Secondly, it seems to be a spontaneous delight, like a child's, in the sunshine of life--a delight which can persist through the shadows. Says the young narrator of Captain Craig's story:

"I felt at length as one who throws himself  
 Down restless on a couch when clouds are dark,  
 And shuts his eyes to find when he wakes up  
 And opens them again what seems at first  
 An unfamiliar sunlight in his room  
 And in his life--as if the child in him  
 Had laughed and let him see, and then I knew  
 Some prowling superfluity of child  
 In me had found the child in Captain Craig



"There were no men to blame,  
 There was just a little more in the library time,  
 A note that said 'God' was right about  
 Happiness on earth - God's gift for all.  
 They might have made him king by taking him  
 Till he should march again, but probably  
 Such a thing would have been considered the right.  
 They found it more pleasant to about  
 Right on, with unobscured abolition.  
 To keep the time as it had always been,  
 To trust in God and let the Captain drive." I

Certainly Gail says that at his death men will have no  
 more to say of him than that he was a humorist. Such a judge-  
 ment to him is no disgrace, because he considers himself an at-  
 tribute of the divine. "God's humor," he says, "is the basis  
 of the spheres," and those who only and only "for some-  
 thing larger, something unfulfilled, some other kind of joy,"  
 will never have it until they "learn to laugh with God."  
 Robinson implies that Gail's humor is akin to  
 God's. Now, then, shall we define this humor? It seems to  
 be, first, a fine sense of proportion, which enables men to  
 distinguish what is base and worthless in life from what is  
 divine. Secondly, it seems to be a spontaneous delight, like  
 a child's, in the something of life--a delight which can per-  
 sist through the shadows. Says the young narrator of Gail's  
 story:

"I felt at length as one who throws himself  
 Down restless on a couch when clouds are dark,  
 And shuts his eyes to find when he wakes up  
 And opens them again what seems to him  
 An unfamiliar sunlight in his room  
 And in his life--as if the child in him  
 Had laughed and let him see, and in I knew  
 Some growing uprightness of child  
 In me had found the child in Gail's story."



And let the sunlight reach him." 1

Later he speaks of "the child that is the man, the Mystery, the Phoenix of the World." Captain Craig writes to his young friend to think of him

"as one who vegetates  
In tune with all the children who laugh best  
And longest through the sunshine, though far off  
Their laughter and unheard, for 'tis the child,  
O friend, that with his laugh redeems the man.  
Time steals the infant, but the child he leaves,  
And we.....  
Were brutes without him." 2

Again the Captain says:

"And the child--  
The child that is the saviour of all ages  
The prophet and the poet, the crown-bearer  
Must yet with Love's unhonored fortitude,  
Survive to cherish and attain for us  
The candor and the generosity  
By leave of which we smile if we bring back  
The first revealing flash that wakened us  
When Wisdom like a flash of dungeon-light  
Came searching down to find us." 3

While Captain Craig exalts the child in man, he warns us against the "child in excess." As an illustration of what he means he tells of the woman who

"goes  
Like a whirlwind through an orchard in the springtime--  
Throwing herself away as if she thought  
The world and the whole planetary circus  
Were a flourish of apple blossoms." 4

She is a woman

"cursed with happiness:  
Beauty, and wealth, health, horses--everything  
That she could ask, or we could ask is hers,  
Except an inward eye for the dim fact  
Of what this dark world is." 5

She

1. Collected Poems, page 122  
2. Ibid., page 125  
3. Ibid., page 132

4. Ibid., page 128  
5. Ibid., page 127



And I - the sunlight search him. I  
 Later he speaks of "the child" that is the man, the youth,  
 the "promise of the world." Captain Girty writes to his young  
 friends to think of him.

"as one who is forgotten  
 In time with all the children who laugh best  
 And forget through the summer, though far off  
 Their laughter and our art, for 'tis the child,  
 O child, that with his laugh redeems the man.  
 Time steals the infant, but the child is Jesus,  
 And we.....  
 Were better without him." 2

again the Captain says:

"and the child--  
 The child that is the savior of all ages  
 The prophet and the poet, the crown-wearer  
 Next yet with love's unnumbered longing,  
 Strive to cherish and attain for us  
 The order and the generosity  
 By love of which we live. It is this word  
 The first revelation flash that we need us  
 When wisdom like a flash of lightning-light  
 Came scattering down to find us." 3

And Captain Girty writes the child is man, he writes us  
 against the "child is man." An illustration of what he  
 means he tells of the young who

"Goes  
 Like a whirling through an orchard in the morning  
 Throwing himself away as if the thought  
 The world and the whole planetary system  
 Were a flourish of some blossom." 4

So is a woman

"coursed with and lacerated  
 Beauty, and wealth, health, honor--everything  
 That she could ask, or we could ask is here,  
 Except an inward eye for the dim fact  
 Of that dark world is." 5

But



"Giggles and eats and reads and goes to church.

'Poor dears, and they have cancers?--Oh,' she says." 1

Next Captain Craig describes one who has "the child in absence." He is a man

"who feeds his very soul on poison.  
No matter what he does or where he looks,  
He finds unhappiness; or if he fails  
To find it, he creates it, and then hugs it.  
.....Give him a rose  
And he will tell you it is very sweet  
But only for a day.....  
One of those men who never quite confess  
That Washington was great." 2

Which of these two, asks Captain Craig, was right?

One was blinded by the lights; one walked in the shadows.

It is well, he answers, to live in the light, but not to be unmindful of the shadows. As for him, in spite of the barren years through which he has lived, he still trusts the light that he has earned

"and having earned, received," 3

and he bids his friends to climb high, knowing

"As well as you know dawn from lantern light  
That far above you, for you, and within you,  
There burns and shines and lives unwavering  
And always yours, the truth. Take on yourself  
But your sincerity, and you take on  
Good promise for all climbing; fly for truth  
And hell shall have no storm to crush your flight,  
No laughter to vex down your loyalty." 4

To clothe his beliefs, he presents several character portraits. He tells of Count Pretzel von Wurzbürger, the obscene, a "vagabond, a drunkard, and a sponge, but always a free creature with a soul":<sup>5</sup> of a soldier who showed such an unexpected friendliness to a ragged, frightened, despairing

1. Collected Poems, page 127

2. Ibid., page 129

3. Ibid., page 134

4. Ibid., page 151

5. Ibid., page 135



"dignified and calm and ready and goes to church."  
"Poor dear, and they have conspired--Oh, I am sure."

Next Captain Craig describes one who has "the child in

spendings." He is a man

"who feels his very soul on poison."  
To matter what he does or what he looks,  
He finds unhappiness; or if he fails  
To find it, he creates it, and then hates it.  
Give him a taste  
And he will tell you it is very sweet  
Not only for a day.....  
One of these men who never quite comes  
That "Washington was great." 3

Which of these two, says Captain Craig, was right?

One was blinded by the light; and walked in the shadows.  
It is well, he answers, to live in the light, but not to be  
unmindful of the shadows. As for him, in spite of the bar-  
ren years through which he has lived, he still trusts the  
light that he has earned

"and never earned, received." 3

and he bids his friends to climb high, knowing

"As well as you know dawn from lantern light  
Just far above you, for you, and within you,  
There burns and shines and lives unwearying  
and alive yours, the truth. Take on yourself  
But your earnestly, and you take on  
Good promise for all climbing; fly for truth  
and hold shall have no more to crush your flight,  
No laughter to set down your loyalty." 4

To a noble belief, he presents several characters  
contrasted. He tells of Count Pretzel von Wundtshagen, the  
obscure, a "vandal, a drunkard, and a sponge, but always a  
free creature with a soul"; of a soldier who always went on  
unexpected friendliness to a target, frightened, trembling



child that "life grew marvellously different," and what had once been "sad and lonely sounds" became now "the rarest music"<sup>1</sup> of a youth who "dreamed but could not sound the rhythm of God." The latter died too young to achieve, but even had he lived, that measure which "went singing through his life" would have ruined him,

"though in that ruin  
There would have lived, as always it has lived  
In ruin as in failure, the supreme  
Fulfilment unexpressed." 2

In this early study, then, occurs Robinson's constantly reiterated theme of the success of apparent failure.

Of all these portraits, none is so affecting as that of the Carpenter of Nazareth, revealed in a dream. The Captain lies on his couch racked and tortured, fearing that with his own dull tools, which he had used "with wretched skill," he might hack out his life.

"But soon, and in the distance  
Concealed, importunate, there was a sound  
Of coming steps,--and I was not afraid;  
No, I was not afraid then, I was glad;  
For I could feel, with every thought, the Man,  
The Mystery, the Child, a footfall nearer.  
Then, when he stood before me, there was no  
Surprise, there was no questioning: I knew him  
As I had known him always, and he smiled.  
'Why are you here?' he asked, and reaching down,  
He took up my dull blades and rubbed his thumb  
Across the edges of them, and then smiled  
Once more.--'I was a carpenter,' I said,  
'But there was nothing in the world to do.'--  
'Nothing,' said he.--'No, nothing,' I replied.--  
'But are you sure,' he asked, 'that you have skill?  
And are you sure that you have learned your trade?  
No, you are not.'--He looked at me and laughed  
As he said that; but I did not laugh then,  
Although I might have laughed.--'They are dull,' said  
he.

1. Collected Poems, page 117

2. Ibid., page 143



which that "little green marvelously different," and what had  
once been "and all lonely again," became now "the latest mu-  
sic" of a youth who "breathed out words not known the rhythm  
of God." The latter tried too young to achieve, but even had  
he lived, what measure which "went singing through his life"  
would have written this,

"though in that time  
there would have I lived, as always it has lived  
in calm as in failure, the essence  
fulfillment unexpressed."

In this early study, then, occurs Robinson's constant re-  
iteration theme of the success of spiritual failure.  
Of all these possibilities, none is so effective as that of  
the Carpenter of Nazareth, revealed in a dream. The Captain  
lies on his couch, racked and tortured, feeling that with his  
own dull tools, which he had used "with stretched skill," he  
might hack out his life.

"But soon, and in the distance  
concealed, important, there was a sound  
of coming steps, - and I cannot recall;  
No, I was not startled, I was glad;  
For I could feel, with every thought, the Man  
The mystery, the Child, a logical career.  
Then, when he stood before me, there was no  
surprise, there was no question: I knew him  
As I had known him always, and he smiled.  
'Why are you here?' he asked, and reaching down  
he took up my dull chisel and rubbed his thumb  
across the edges of it, and then smiled.  
'Come here.' - 'I was a carpenter,' I said.  
'But there was nothing in the world to do.' -  
'Nothing,' said he. - 'No, nothing,' I replied. -  
'But are you sure?' he asked, 'that you have skill?'  
and are you sure that you have learned your trade?  
No, you are not.' - He looked at me and I smiled.  
As he said that; but I did not laugh then.  
Although I might have laughed. - 'They are dull,' said  
he.



'They were not very sharp if they were ground;  
 But they are what you have, and they will earn  
 What you have not. So take them as they are,  
 Grind them and clean them, put new handles to them,  
 And then go learn your trade in Nazareth.  
 Only be sure that you find Nazareth.'--  
 'But if I starve--what then?' said I. He smiled." 1

Here are epitomized many of the thoughts of the whole poem. The kindly laughter of the Carpenter betokens the divine humor which sees beyond apparent failure. The illumined smile spreads hope and courage. "The Child," who is also the "Man, the Mystery," companions mankind in love, and the Light is Nazareth.

The themes of light and courage occur also in other poems of the volume. In ISAAC AND ARCHIBALD are the lines:

"There's a light behind the stars  
 And we old fellows who have dared to live,  
 We see it." 2

THE KLONDIKE tells of the search of the twelve, unsuccessful but undaunted, "to find the golden river." SAINTE NITOUCHE relates the history of a man who took "the starry way, God's pathway through the gloom," and though when he died the world adjudged him a failure, "that was not the end of him."

"For what was his to live lives yet;  
 Truth, quarter truth, death cannot reach." 3

No one knows whether he won the "unseen crown," but

"Saint Anthony nor Sainte Nitouche  
 Had ever smiled as he did--quite." 4

In CAPTAIN CRAIG, therefore, are further elaborated the themes of light and courage. New notes are added in the ideas of earning the light which we receive, and of leaving behind

1. Collected Poems, page 141
2. Ibid., page 169
3. Ibid., page 216
4. Ibid., page 217







us after death such truth as we have discovered, even though it be but half, or even quarter truth.

In the next volume, THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER, published in 1910, the Light is variously treated in THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER,<sup>1</sup> CLAVERING,<sup>2</sup> BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD,<sup>3</sup> and THE PILOT.<sup>4</sup> In LINGARD AND THE STARS<sup>5</sup> is the conviction of Lingard, at least, of survival after death.

"When earth is cold and there is no more sea,  
There will be what was Lingard. Otherwise,  
Why lure the race to ruin through the skies?  
And why have Leffingwell, or Calverly?" 5

This conviction is another variation of Robinson's idea of the Light.

In this volume also are three more historical portraits. THE MASTER is of Lincoln, and contrasts the pettiness of those who reviled him with his world-wide fame and grandeur.

"For he, to whom we had applied  
Our shopman's test of age and worth,  
Was elemental when he died,  
As he was ancient at his birth." 6

The second of the portraits is AN ISLAND. The island is St. Helena, and the frenzied words are Napoleon's. After all his dreams of world domination, he spends his last days, with tragic irony, on a little island lashed by his old enemy, the sea. In the present, there are only the island, rats, and pain to contemplate; of the past, the laurels he won for so short a time.

"So be the weary truth again retold

1. Collected Poems, page 319

2. Ibid., page 333

3. Ibid., page 342

4. Ibid., page 348

5. Ibid., page 334

6. Ibid., page 317



an afterthought which shows that we have the reverse, and should  
be put back, or even discarded.

In the next volume, THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER, published in  
1910, the title is variously interpreted as 'TOWN DOWN THE  
RIVER, I GUESS', 'TOWN DOWN THE RIVER, I GUESS', and 'TOWN  
DOWN THE RIVER, I GUESS'. In the conviction of the author, it  
is, of course, after death.

"There is a light in the night, and there is no more sea,  
There is a light in the night, and there is no more sea,  
Why have the stars to this night, the stars?  
And why have the stars, or why have the stars?"

This conviction is another variation of Robinson's idea of  
the light.

In this volume also are some more historical references.  
THE TOWN DOWN THE RIVER, and contains the pictures of  
those who lived with him in the world-wide town and garden.

For he, to whom we had written  
Our hopes and fears of one and two,  
Was also, when he died,  
As he was, and as he was, and as he was.

The record of the contents is in 1910. The record is  
of the town, and the friends who are Robinson's. It is all  
his record of world history, he says his last days, with  
regard to the town, on a little island, and by the sea, the  
sea. In the present, there are only the island, the sea, and  
pain to be remembered; of the past, the future is not far so  
distant a time.  
So be the very first again to be.

- |                              |                    |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Collected forms, page 219 | 4. Ibid., page 228 |
| 2. Ibid., page 228           | 5. Ibid., page 228 |
| 3. Ibid., page 228           | 6. Ibid., page 228 |



Of great kings overthrown  
Because they would be kings, and lastly kings alone." 1

Napoleon had no light beyond that of self-glorification, while Lincoln's was a light too bright for his world to comprehend. In the third portrait, THE REVEALER, Robinson extols Theodore Roosevelt as also guided by a light far above the understanding of his complacent age. He calls him "the seer of our necessity," and believes that he has brought light to the shadows, has opened doors, and has exposed ills long concealed, but

"What You and I and Anderson  
Are still to do is his reward;  
If we go back when he is gone--  
There is an Angel with a Sword." 2

These three poems shed light on Robinson's political views. The only hope for a people which lives in darkness and is content to serve Mammon is in its great men, whom it cannot even recognize.

The next volume of poems is THE MAN AGAINST THE SKY, published in 1916. It includes studies of inconsequential men like Flammonde<sup>3</sup> and Old King Cole,<sup>4</sup> who saw the Light and so were not failures; of Briony<sup>5</sup> and Bokardo,<sup>6</sup> who saw none and were therefore failures; and of the young man in SIEGE PERILOUS,<sup>7</sup> who followed, against all opposition, a light by which he thought to shake the world. His achievement lagged far behind his dream, yet he did win a crown of a sort.

"There fell one day upon his eyes a light

1. Collected Poems, page 326

2. Ibid., page 360

3. Ibid., page 3

4. Ibid., page 17

5. Ibid., page 48

6. Ibid., page 58

7. Ibid., page 41



of which many overtook  
 because they would be better, and lastly, the  
 The next day he light before that of anti-slavery  
 while Lincoln's was a light for the world to see  
 and in the same breath, the same day, Robins-  
 told Lincoln: "Hoc was it as I said before  
 the understanding of his countrymen. He calls him  
 seen in your country, and I know that he has brought light  
 to the world, and opened doors, and has exposed this land  
 corrupted, but

What you and I did  
 are still to be done  
 "If we do not do it  
 there is an awful trial ahead."

There is no such thing as a free lunch  
 vision. The only way for a people to live in peace  
 and to want to serve human is to be free, and  
 cannot be reconciled.

The next volume of notes in the series, THE  
 issued in 1918. It contains a volume of documents  
 like Lincoln's and the other side, who saw the light and  
 were not taken; of Henry's and Henry's, who saw  
 with their own eyes; and of the young in the  
 1860's, who fought, against all opposition, a fight of which  
 he thought to shake the world. His achievement is  
 him his dream, yet he did not know of it.  
 There is no day when his light

- |                              |                  |
|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Collected notes, page 100 | 2. 1915, page 40 |
| 2. 1911, page 300            | 3. 1916, page 30 |
| 3. 1914, page 3              | 4. 1915, page 31 |
| 4. 1914, page 15             |                  |



Ethereal, and he heard no more men speaking;  
He saw their shaken heads, but no long sight  
Was his but for the end that he went seeking.

"The end he sought was not the end; the crown  
He won shall unto many still be given.  
Moreover, there was reason here to frown:  
No fury thundered, no flame fell from heaven." 1

CASSANDRA repeats the ideas of THE REVEALER.

"Verily  
What word have I for children here?  
Your dollar is your only Word.  
The wrath of it your only fear.

.....

"Think you to tread forever down  
The merciless old verities?  
Are you never to have eyes  
To see the world for what it is?

"Are you to pay for what you have  
With all you are?' No other word  
We caught, but with a laughing crowd  
Moved on. None heeded, and few heard." 2

Between THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT and THE MAN AGAINST THE SKY,<sup>3</sup> the last poem in the volume, Lloyd Morris finds evidence of great growth. The former, he says, is "a declaration of personal faith," while the latter is "a poignantly imaginative vision of the whole of life."<sup>4</sup> In this poem a man stands revealed for an instant on a high mountain against a flaming sky. Then he disappears into the unknown. This symbolizes man's passing from life. How has he reached the height, asks Robinson, and whither has he gone? The author then reviews the different faiths by which men have sought to explain life. What "drove or lured or guided him?"

It may have been a "vision answering a faith unshaken,"

1. Collected Poems, page 41

2. Ibid., pages 11, 12

3. Ibid., page 60

4. Lloyd Morris, The Poetry of  
Edwin Arlington Robinson,  
Page 71







by which he strove alone from one height to another, burned as in a fiery furnace. Or "by an easy trust assumed of easy trials," he may always have taken the comfortable path carved out by those who had toiled before him and have aspired to no other height "than one at which he neither quails nor tires." Or, "by a sick negation born of weak denials," he may have been utterly indifferent to anything outside of himself, have seen "truth in his own image, rather small," and found "life a lighted highway to the tomb." Or, "by a crazed abhorrence of an old condition," he may have "stumbled up from the past," seeing ahead nothing but chaos and a "last abysmal conflagration of his dreams." Or, "by a blind attendance on a brief ambition," he may have seen with his mechan-ic eyes

"a world without a meaning."

and labored only to "build himself an airy monument" that should "outlast an accidental universe."

At any rate, says Robinson, the way he took was ours, and each of us "at his own height" must await "another darkness or another light." If we believe not in Hell, Heaven, or Oblivion, have we no misgivings about "doing yet what we leave undone"? If we do believe in Oblivion, how can we excuse ourselves for launching those we love into a life of pain, of ashes, and of eternal night.?

Wherever this man against the sky was going, we know that his brief passing, his transience, have made some contribution



by which he arrives alone from on heights to another, perhaps  
as in a fairy tale. Or "by an easy first passage of easy  
trials," he may arrive, have taken the comfortable path between  
out by those who have called before him and have suggested to  
no other path. "Then one is told to believe that he  
finds." Or, "by a slow negotiation born of great desires," he  
may have been brought to a point of view, outside of his  
self, have seen "things in his own mind, rather small," and  
found "a slight change in his mind." Or, "by a gradual  
absorption of an old condition," he may have "stepped up  
from the past," seeing ahead nothing but those who "find  
optimal conditions of his frame." Or "by a blind ascent-  
ance on a brief ambition," he may have seen with his hands-  
to eyes

"a world without a meaning."  
and labor only to "find" in any manner, that  
should "believe in accidental discovery."  
At any rate, says Robinson, the way he took was one,  
and each of us "at his own height" must make "another mark-  
ness or another light." "If we believe not in Hell, Heaven,  
or God, have we no message about 'the way' yet what we  
leave behind?" If we do believe in God, how can we ex-  
pose ourselves for something that we love into a life of  
pain, of "suffering, and of eternal night?"  
However, this is what the boy was going, we know that  
his great mystery, his transience, have made some contribution



to the Word that shall lead the race onward. We know that no mere striving to satisfy physical desires, "no soft evangel of equality," no meaningless trapping of souls "wrought for nothing but the sake of being caught," will accomplish this purpose. Because Eternity records too vast an answer for us, shall we hear no more the Word? What do we see beyond the sunset "that lights again the way by which we came"? Why do we pay such a price "for each racked empty day

"That leads one more last human hope away"?

Finally, if all our suffering comes to Nought, why do we live?

As always, Robinson leaves his question unanswered, but implies that there is in man something too great to be forever annihilated, and that after death he may still bring to pass his unfulfilled dreams. He implies too that in life each man climbs to his own height, and according to the height he attains, he makes some contribution to the Word by which future generations are to be guided.

Merlin is the first of the legendary characters of which Robinson makes use. The poem MERLIN is the tale of a man who once had the Light, but did not follow it. Yet he never entirely lost it, and when his world collapsed about him, he pressed on sadly toward the pale glimmer which remained. Published in 1917, MERLIN also reflects the unrest of the world in conflict. Merlin, symbolizing Philosophy, or man's intellect, "has seen as much as God would let him see."



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 beyond the sunset "that lights again the way by which we  
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"That leads one more lost human hope away?"  
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 never entirely lost it, and when his world collapsed about  
 him, he pressed on sadly toward the pale glimmer which  
 remained. Published in 1817, WIELAND also reflects the unrest  
 of the world in conflict. Wieland, symbolizing philosophy, or  
 man's intellect, "has seen as much as God would let him see."



Loving the world with all its imperfections, and loving Arthur with like frailties, he has made Arthur king of Camelot. Though he knows that Arthur's kingdom, founded upon two sins, "awaits a sure doom," he nevertheless thinks he has done well, for he supposes that the world will see itself mirrored in Arthur and at his ignoble fall will endeavor to redeem itself from a like fate. Thereupon Merlin departs to bury himself in Brittany at the lure of the lady Vivian. She symbolizes Love and eternal Woman in her youth and beauty, especially the new woman of the new age, restlessly awaiting she knows not what. Here, his work complete, he thinks to be "crowned with the glory of eternal peace."

At the very outset, however, that peace is threatened. The gate of Broceliande clangs behind him as no gate had

"ever clanged in Camelot  
Nor in any other place if not in Hell." 1

There are ominous specks in the wine served only to kings and makers of kings. There arises

"Between him and the world a crumbling sky  
Of black and crimson, with a crimson cloud  
That held a far-off town of many towers  
All swayed and shaken till at last they fell." 2

At Vivian's insistence he has removed his beard, symbol of his wisdom. "So," says Arthur, "he goes down smiling to the smaller life.....by love made little."

Nevertheless for ten years he finds a semblance of peace in Broceliande. Then comes Dagonet "like an awkward bird of doom" with the King's message. Without question Merlin re-



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he thinks to be "crowned with the glory of eternal peace."  
At the very outset, however, that peace is threatened.  
The Gate of Brocelande closes behind him as he goes and  
"never changed in Camelot  
Not in any other place is not in Hell." I  
There are ominous aspects in the wine served only to kings  
and knights of the round table.  
"Between him and the world's crowding sky  
Of black and crimson, with a crimson cloud  
That held a far-off town of many towers  
All swayed and shaken till at last they fell." I  
At Vivian's insistence he has removed a beard, symbol of  
his wisdom. "So," says Arthur, "he goes down smiling to the  
smaller life..... by love made little."  
Nevertheless for some years he finds a semblance of peace  
in Brocelande. Then comes Gahmuret "like an arrowed bird of  
doom" with the King's message. Without question Merlin re-



turns sadly to Arthur, who sees at once on his face "a pathos of lost authority long faded and unconscionably gone."

Says Arthur to him:

"I shall see no Grail. For I have built  
On sand and mud, and I shall see no Grail.'  
.....  
'Nor I'" says Merlin. "'Once I dreamed of it,  
But I was buried. I shall see no Grail.  
.....I saw  
Too much and that was never good for man.'" 1

In the face of the collapse of Camelot, Merlin is helpless.

"Arthur shall know now," he says,

"That I am less than Fate..... 2  
For I can be no more what I was  
And I can do no more than I have done.'" 3

Yet the King sees that meshed as Merlin is in his defection, even to indifference, he is

"All the while attended and exalted  
By some unfathomable obscurity  
Of divination, where the Grail unseen  
Broke yet the darkness where a King saw nothing." 4

When he returns to Vivian, there is no more peace for him in Broceliande, for

"in his Paradise  
Had come an unseen angel with a sword." 5

His thoughts give him no rest. Will his "avenging injured intellect," he wonders, like Arthur's fallen kingdom, be also a mirror, "Fate's plaything, in which new ages will see themselves and their declension"? At last, in a melancholy wave of revelation, he realizes that the cold angel's name is Change. He has seen too much for God's pleasure; that is, he has been too sure that he has seen all; he has forgotten that

1. Collected Poems, page 253-4  
2. Ibid., page 259  
3. Ibid., page 282

4. Ibid., page 258  
5. Ibid., page 286



...to Arthur, who sees it all on his face "a  
 those of lost authority, long faded and unrecognizable."

Says Arthur to him:

"I shall see no Grief. For I have built  
 On grief and pain, and I shall see no Grief."

.....  
 "Once I dreamed of it,  
 But I was wrong. I shall see no Grief."

..... I saw  
 Too much and that was never good for me. I

In the face of the collapse of Grief, Merlin is helpless.

"Arthur shall know now," he says.

"Yet I am less than Fate....."

For I can be no more than I was  
 And I can do no more than I have done."

Yet the King sees that Merlin is in his distress,

even so indifference, he is

"All the while attended and exalted

By some antithetical obscurity

Of divination, where the Great Unseen

Prove yet the darkness where a King was waiting."

When he returns to Vivian, there is no more peace for him

in Excalibur, for

"...his Paradise

Had come an unseen angel with a sword."

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mirror, "Fate's playing, in which new eyes will see them-

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Time does not stand still, and in consequence has forsaken the Gleam and turned aside to dalliance.

"But let the man  
Who saw too much, and was to drive himself  
From paradise, play too lightly or too long  
Among the moths and flowers, he finds at last  
There is a dim way out;.....  
And there.....  
Shall he plod on, with death between him now  
And the far light that guides him, till he falls.  
.....I see the light,  
But I shall fall before I come to it;  
For I am old.....I saw too far,  
But not so far as this. Fate played with me  
As I have played with Time.'" 1

"This is the end," he tells Dagonet, after he has left Broceliande forever, "though in the end are many beginnings." It was the end of Arthur's insubstantial majesty when the Grail foreshadowed a quest of life that would lead many to death and some to "slow discouraging." It was

"a Light wherein men saw themselves,  
In one another as they might become.'" 2

Many went to seek the Grail, and though none found it save Galahad (who dies and yet lives) they all saw "Something" which rendered the old ways forever unsatisfying. The kingdom, however, says Merlin, has not been wrecked in vain. Each man is a groping thought of the eternal will, who has no other way to find his inheritance than by the

"time-infuriating flame  
Of a wrecked empire, lighted by the torch  
Of woman, who, together with the light  
That Galahad found is yet to light the world.'" 3

Vivian, reflects Merlin, is not cold and cruel, as she said, but warm and kind and overwise for woman in a world

1. Collected Poems, page 295-6-7  
2. Ibid., page 306

3. Ibid., page 307



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"But let the man  
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From paradise, play too lightly or too soon  
Among the roses and lilies, his hands at last  
There is a his way out;.....  
And there.....  
Shall be glad on, with death between him now  
And the far light that guides him, till he falls.  
..... I see the light,  
But I shall fall before I come to it;  
For I am old..... I am too far,  
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where men see not beyond themselves. Her heart is hungry for something which does not exist and shall never exist without her in a world that men are making. She says to him:

"For you have wisdom, I have only sight  
For distant things--and you." 1

The full significance of MERLIN is understood only when we remember that it was written in the midst of the World War. Camelot's fall symbolizes the collapse of the pre-war civilization. Man's intellect in that era seemed all-powerful. As Arthur's kingdom founded on sin could not abide, no more could a civilization founded on wrongs and misconceptions. Yet men's intellect failed to prevent the catastrophe. Then men must turn to the ideal, the light within themselves--a light, moreover, which must be supplemented by woman's yet unfulfilled promise. The ideal for which men fought in the War was the vision of men as they might become. What they could not accomplish, future generations, building on their failure, may.

Underlying this, of course, is the story of Merlin, who had the Light and who, by not following it, brought ruin upon himself and his world.

LANCELOT, published in 1920, is also a product of the World War period. It portrays not only the physical conflict of armies, but the war in men's hearts. It questions the right of kings to be kings, and the worth of war. It reveals



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LAMORCOT, published in 1930, is also a product of the  
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of armies, but the war in man's heart. It questions the  
right of kings to be kings, and the worth of war. It reveals



the innate grandeur of human nature, walking stedfastly in the light for the time vouchsafed, resolutely turning from an outgrown ideal to another more potent, going down in defeat, yet rising again to press on through the darkness to the dim light ahead.

When Lancelot failed in his loyalty to Arthur, he believed his love and Guinevere's to be mightier than they. Then came the Light beckoning him away from her to "set out on the immortal Quest," to "go South to find the fires of God." After his return no one knew him for the man he was,

"Before" he "saw whatever it was" he "saw,  
To make so little of kings and queen and  
friends." 1

That light, he says, would have blinded him, but there comes another which he knows will not blind him, a Light mightier even than his love for Guinevere. Fear, he tells her, is driving him from her, not fear of Arthur and Modred, who desire his life, but fear of Modred, who desires the Queen and makes disaster imminent. But, says the Queen,

"'There is a Light you fear more today  
Than all the darkness that has ever been.'" 2

Knowing still no guide but love, yet scorning to be a "curse upon his conscience," a "weight to be dragged on always after him," Guinevere begs Lancelot for one last meeting before he departs. He is racked by regret for the past and remorse for what is to come.

"'Time, tide, and twilight--and the dark,  
And then for me the Light. But what for her?

1. Collected Poems, page 367
2. Ibid., page 379







".....Why are we here?  
 What are we doing--kings, queens, Camelots,  
 And Lancelot? And what is this dim world  
 That I would have?.....  
 .....Who is this queen?  
 .....What are kings,  
 And how much longer are they to be kings?  
 When are the millions who are now like worms  
 To know that kings are worms, if they are worms." 1

So Lancelot feeds

"The passion and the fear that now in him  
 Were burning like two slow infernal fires  
 That only flight and exile far away  
 From Camelot should ever cool again." 2

Despairingly he cries:

"God, what a rain of ashes falls on him  
 Who sees the new and cannot leave the old." 3

At last he yields to Guinevere, as gradually in his vision  
 the face of Galahad, "for whom the Light was waiting," re-  
 cedes, and he sees only the Queen's face, and knows it is not  
 good

"That he should learn so late, and of this hour  
 What men may leave behind them in the eyes  
 Of women who have nothing more to give,  
 And may not follow after." 4

That night, in obedience to the law, Arthur orders  
 Guinevere to be burned to death. Says Bedivere:

"The King that is the father of the law  
 Is weaker than his child, except he slay it.  
 Not long ago, Gawaine, I had a dream  
 Of a sword over kings and of a world  
 Without them." 5

Remorse for his deed nearly maddens Arthur. When, however,  
 he learns that the Queen has been saved, a joy steals over  
 him because she still lives, though now gone from him irre-  
 trievably; and

1. Collected Poems, page 383

2. Ibid., page 384

3. Ibid., page 385

4. Ibid., page 386

5. Ibid., page 389



"That are we doing--kings, queens, Camellias,  
 And Lancasters? And what is this dim world  
 That I would have?..... Who is this queen?  
 ..... That are kings,  
 And how much longer are they to be kings?  
 When are the millions who are now like worms  
 To know that kings are worms, if they are worms, and

So Lancasters, ladies

"The passion and the fear that now is him  
 Were burning like two stars in the night  
 That only light and exile far away  
 From Caesar should ever cool again."

Despairingly he cries:

"God, what a rain of ashes falls on him  
 Who sees the new and cannot leave the old."

At last he yields to Calpurnius, as gradually in his vision  
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"The vision of a peace that humbled him  
 And yet might save the world that he had won  
 Came slowly into view.....  
 ..... 'Better be that  
 Even that than blood,' he sighed, 'if that be peace.' "1

Yet Modred, who symbolizes evil in his anger at his birth, ambition for the throne, and lust for the Queen, will not give him peace. Nor will Gawaine. Though the latter reproaches himself bitterly for having failed, even at the expense of his two brothers, to save Lancelot from this night of doom, yet for the life of those two brothers, who fell under Lancelot's axe, he demands Lancelot's blood.

So there is war with all its unprofitable slaughter; nor can there be peace so long as Arthur, Gawaine, and Lancelot are alive. Knowing that Lancelot might many times have dispatched his enemies, but is deterred by grief at the wrong he did Gawaine and by pity for the King, who once had loved him above all others, the Queen pleads:

" 'A woman.....  
 .....may see but one side only  
 Where maybe there are two, to say no more.  
 .....And if the world  
 Of Arthur's name be now a dying glory,  
 Why bleed it for the sparing of a man  
 Who hates you and a King who hates himself?' " 2

Lancelot cannot yield, but later agrees to the Bishop's proposal to end the war by sending the Queen back to Camelot. As he breaks the dread news to her he

"soon forgot the memory of all smiling  
 While he gazed on the glimmering face and hair  
 Of Guinevere--the glory of white and gold  
 That had been his, and were, for taking of it,  
 Still his to cloud with an insidious gleam  
 Of earth, another that was not of earth,

1. Collected Poems, page 400
2. Ibid., page 404-5



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And yet might save the world that he had won  
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Still his to cloud with an insidious gleam  
Of earth, another that was not of earth,



And so to make of him a thing of night--  
 A moth between a window and a star,  
 Not wholly lured by one or led by the other." 1

Can he never doubt a Vision, she asks, that lets him forget so lightly one for whom he once had cared so much, while she would have thrown down "crowns and glories" to share with him the last part of the world? Their love is of God, she holds, and God would not begrudge them one more morsel of life together. Their path would only end in havoc, he replies. A power not his own avails him strangely and he sees much

"in what has come to pass  
 That is to be." 2

She begs him to drive the sword into her heart, or at least to go to France with her, but he says they would not stay long in the old garden.

"The fruit that we should find would be all fallen  
 And have the taste of earth." 3

Yet is Guinevere sacrificed in vain, for the war still goes on in France. It is not until Gawaine falls at Lancelot's hands that his hate dissipates.

"I have no more venom in me now.  
 .....  
 There was a madness feeding on us all,  
 As we fed on the world.....  
 .....The world has paid enough  
 For Camelot. It is the world's turn now,  
 Or it would be if the world were not  
 The world. Another Camelot, Bedivere says.  
 Another Camelot and another King.  
 He says when he's awake; but when he dreams  
 There are no kings." 4

When the war in Britain between Arthur and Modred is over,

"Each by the other slain," 5

1. Collected Poems, page 415
2. Ibid., page 421
3. Ibid., page 426

4. Collected Poems, pages 430-1
5. Ibid., page 436



And so to make of him a thing of night--  
A moth between a window and a star,  
Not wholly loved by one or led by the other." 1

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and God would not begrudge them one more morsel of life to-  
gether. Their path would only end in heaven, he replies. A  
power not his own avails him strangely and he sees much

"In what has come to pass  
That is to be." 2

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The world. Another Camelot, Bedivere says,  
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There are no kings." 4

When the war in Britain between Arthur and Mordred is over,  
"Each by the other slain," 5

- |                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Collected Poems, page 415 | 4. Collected Poems, page 430-1 |
| 2. Ibid., page 431           |                                |
| 3. Ibid., page 432           | 5. Ibid., page 432             |



a cloud of memories overwhelms Lancelot, a cloud "for no  
Light to pierce,"<sup>1</sup> and

"what was gone  
Had now another lure than once it had." <sup>2</sup>

In the futility of the present, the dimness of the future, the  
old, symbolized by Guinevere, has now a new allurements. But  
how changed he finds her in Almesbury! For

"She was not the Queen of white and gold.  
.....  
The black hood and the white face under it  
And the blue frightened eyes were all he saw." <sup>3</sup>

"Is this the end of Camelot?" <sup>4</sup> he asks in dismay, and  
she replies:

"We are told of other States  
Where there are palaces, if we should need them,  
That are not made with hands. I thought you knew.  
.....There is nothing now  
That I can see between you and the Light  
That I have dimmed so long." <sup>5</sup>

He is good to come to her, she tells him, for she would  
have been lonely many a night not knowing if he cared.

"And there is not much else for me to know  
That earth may tell me. I found in the Tower  
With Modred watching that all you said  
That rainy night was true. There was time there  
To find out everything. There were long days  
And there were nights that I should not have said  
God would have made a woman to endure.  
I wonder if a woman lives who knows  
All she may do." <sup>6</sup>

Having emerged from that fiery furnace, she now refuses  
his importunities and reminds him that even if they could go  
back to the old garden, the fruit would be all fallen. When  
he leaves her, she says, he must follow the Light, and though  
she has not what he has to make her see, she will some time

1. Collected Poems, page 431

2. Ibid., page 438

3. Ibid., page 440

4. Ibid., Ibid., page 440

5. Ibid., page 440-1

6. Ibid., page 442



a cloud of memories overwhelmed him, a cloud "for no

light to please," and

"What was gone

Had now another form than once it had." 5

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old, symbolized by Guinevere, has now a new alignment. But

now changed he finds her in Almesbury! For

"She was not the queen of white and gold.

.....  
The black hood and the white face and it  
And the blue frightened eyes were all he saw." 6

"Is this the end of Camelot?" he asks in dismay, and

she replies:

"We are told of other States  
Where there are palaces, if we should need them,  
That are not made with hands. I thought you knew.  
.....  
That I can see between you and the light  
That I have dreamed no long." 7

He is good to come to her, she tells him, for she would

have been lonely many a night not knowing if he cared.

"And there is not such else for me to know  
That earth may tell me. I found in the Tower  
With hooded watching that all you said.  
That rainy night was true. There was time there  
To stand out everything. There were long days  
And there were nights that I should not have said  
God would have made a woman to endure.  
I wonder if a woman lives who knows  
All the way do." 8

Having emerged from that fiery furnace, she now returns

his importunities and reminds him that even if they could go

back to the old garden, the first would be all fallen. Then

he leaves her, she says, he must follow the light, and though

she has not what he has to make her end, she will some time

1. Collected Poems, page 431	4. Ibid., page 440
2. Ibid., page 438	5. Ibid., page 440-1
3. Ibid., page 440	6. Ibid., page 442



have a new light of her own." <sup>1</sup>

As he rides away he can see nothing but

"her poor white face and hands, alone." <sup>2</sup>

Over the land there is peace, but no peace in his heart. Once he thinks to turn back and make her free, but the Voice within him says:

"'You are not free.  
You have come to the world's end, and it is best  
You are not free. When the Light falls, death falls,  
And in the darkness comes the Light.'" <sup>3</sup>

So

"always in the darkness he rode on  
Alone, and in the darkness came the Light." <sup>4</sup>

In this poem man in his wisdom is racked by the conflict between love or woman and devotion to the Ideal, between the old order and the new. When the man-made world topples and falls, he turns to woman. Woman knows nothing greater than love, and though she has no choice but to yield to wisdom, after fiery trials she emerges with her love still dominant and stronger now than wisdom. The hope of the new world is the Light that comes to man out of darkness and the Light that is woman's own.

THE THREE TAVERNS was published in 1920. There is an echo of the War in the first poem, THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW. <sup>5</sup> It enumerates many who yield to their lower natures, but never find in the Valley of the Shadow any consummation of their desires. Only those who in despair go down into the Valley

1. Collected Poems, page 445  
2. Ibid., page 447  
3. Ibid., 448

4. <sup>1</sup>bid., page 449  
5. Ibid., page 453



have a new light of her own.  
 As he rises now, he can see nothing but  
 that poor white face and hands, alone.  
 Over the land there is peace, but no peace in his heart. Once  
 he thinks to turn back and make her free, but the voice within  
 him says:

"You are not free.  
 You have come to the world's end, and it is dead.  
 You are not free. When the light fails, death fails,  
 and in the darkness comes the light."

So  
 Always in the darkness he rode on  
 Alone, and in the darkness came the light.  
 In the poem and in his vision is reached by the conflict  
 between love or reason and devotion to the ideal, between the  
 old order and the new. He is a man-made world torn apart and  
 killed, he turns to woman. Woman knows nothing greater than  
 love, and though she has no choice but to yield to reason,  
 after fifty years she emerges with her love still unchanged  
 and stronger now than when. The hope of the new world is  
 the light that comes to man out of darkness and the light that  
 is woman's own.

THE IRISH TATLER was published in 1850. There is an  
 echo of the War in the first poem, THE VALLEY OF THE SPIDER.  
 It commemorates many who yield to their low nature, but never  
 find in the Valley of the Spider any compensation of their  
 else. Only those who in despair go down into the Valley



expecting only darkness find what they seek. Yet those who through no volition of their own, like those forced into the War, are plunged into the Valley may accomplish even there a noble work.

"For the children of the dark are more to name than are  
the wretched,  
Or the broken, or the weary, or the baffled, or the  
shamed;  
There are builders of new mansions in the Valley of the  
Shadow  
And among them are the dying and the blinded and the  
maimed."

The other poems repeat the ideas already formulated in Robinson's earlier works. THE THREE TAVERNS,<sup>1</sup> about the apostle Paul, JOHN BROWN,<sup>2</sup> and REMBRANDT TO REMBRANDT<sup>3</sup> are all of men who have followed the Light they saw, though in each case it has meant the loss of the favor of the world. All three are sure of the lasting value of their life's work.

Says John Brown:

"I shall have more to say when I am dead."

Says Rembrandt:

"Hold your light  
So that you see.....  
Assured that if you see right,  
Others will have to see."

Says Paul:

"Death, like a friend unseen, shall say to me  
My toil is over and my work begun."

In Paul's words also, which are the fruit of the experiences of a long life, are reflected a fearlessness and a trust in meeting whatever the future holds, as well as a serenity and a peace which must be the reward in age of a life-long following

1. Collected Poems, page 461

2. Ibid., page 485

3. Ibid., page 582



expecting only darkness find what they seek. Yet those who  
through the collision of their own, like those forced into the  
war, are plunged into the Valley may accomplish even more a  
people work.

"For the children of the dark are more to name than are  
the wretched,  
Of the broken, or the weary, or the palled, or the  
shamed;  
There are children of new nations in the Valley of the  
Shadows  
And among them are the blind and the blind and the blind  
blind."

The other poems repeat the ideas already formulated in  
Robinson's earlier works. THE THREE TAVENES, I about the  
agonies Paul, JOHN BROWN, and REMBRANT TO REMBRANT are all  
of men who have followed the light they saw, though in each  
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Says John Brown:

"I shall have more to say when I am dead."

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So that you see.....  
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My toil is over and my work begun."

In Paul's words also, which are the fruit of the exertions  
of a long life, are reflected a fearlessness and a trust in  
nothing whatever the future holds, as well as a certainty and a  
peace which must be the reward in age of a life-long following



of the Light. He says he has seen

"too much of time and men  
To fear the ravening or the wrath of either," 1

and

"out of wisdom has come love,  
That measures and is of itself the measure  
Of works and hope and faith.....  
.....The last days  
Are on the way that you prepare for them,  
And was prepared for you, here in a world  
Where you have sinned and suffered, striven and seen.  
If you be not so hot for counting them  
Before they come that you consume yourselves,  
Peace may attend you all in these last days--  
And me, as well as you. Yes, even in Rome.  
.....  
But none may say what he shall find in Rome." 2

ON THE WAY<sup>3</sup> is an historical portrait of another of Democracy's great men, Washington.

"His genius is a flame that he must hold  
So far above the common heads of men  
That they may view him only through the mist  
Of their defect, and wonder what he is."

DEMOS<sup>4</sup> again holds a warning against trusting to the people, who view "through the mist of their defect" all such leaders who see the Light.

"Give as I will, I cannot give you sight  
Whereby to see that with you there are some  
To lead you, and be led. But they are dumb  
Before the wrangling and the shrill delight  
Of your deliverance that has not come,  
And shall not, if I fail you--as I might.  
.....  
Rather be then your prayer that you shall have  
Your kingdom undishonored. Having all,  
See not the great among you for the small,  
But hear their silence; for the few shall save  
The many, or the many are to fall--  
Still to be wrangling in a noisy grave."

In sharp contrast to the foregoing characters are two

1. Collected Poems, page 462
2. Ibid., page 470-1
3. Ibid., page 474
4. Ibid., page 471







overwhelming examples of men without light, Tasker Norris, in the poem of the same name,<sup>1</sup> and Avon, in AVON'S HARVEST.<sup>2</sup> The former had no aim, no friend, no genius, no madness, even, to make life worth the living; the latter was driven to madness and death by a hate which he had conceived in his boyhood.

ROMAN BARTHLOW,<sup>3</sup> published in 1923, is a long poem about a man who walked in darkness and then saw a light, which, after the disloyalty of his best friend and the ruin of his home, still gave him courage to go on to achieve.

"The man of books  
Answered him only with a lonely smile:  
And then, among the slowly falling leaves,  
He walked away and vanished gradually,  
Like one who had not been. Yet he had been  
For Bartholow the man who knew him best,  
And loved him best,--acknowledging always one  
That had betrayed and saved him. He was gone,  
Also, and there was no more to be said  
Of him; and there was no more to be paid,  
Apparently, on either side. The sum  
Of all that each had ever owed the other  
Was covered, sealed, and cancelled in a grave,  
Where lay a woman doomed never to live--  
That he who had adored her and outgrown her  
Might yet achieve." 4

THE MAN WHO DIED TWICE,<sup>5</sup> published in 1924, is the story of a man great in failure. In his youth Fernando Nash had believed that he was born to write a great symphony. He had listened, however, to the "drums of death." After twenty years of debauchery, he had heard once again the "drums of life," and had spent his last months triumphantly beating a drum on the sidewalk "for the glory of God." His "former dominance and authority," though now "disintegrated, lapsed,

1. Collected Poems, page 499

2. Ibid., page 543

3. Ibid., page 733

4. Ibid., page 865

5. Ibid., page 921



overwhelming evidence of her wisdom, her power, her  
the most of one who had, in her own right,  
The former had no air, no friend, no genius, no madness, even,  
to make life worth the living; the latter was driven to mad-  
ness and death by a hate which he had conceived in his boyhood  
GROWING PAIN, published in 1925, is a long poem  
about a man who waited in darkness and then saw a light, which  
after the discovery of his first friend and the ruin of his  
home, still gave him courage to go on to achieve.

"The man of books  
answered his only friend, a lonely sailor;  
And then, among the slowly falling leaves,  
He walked away and vanished, finally,  
Like one who had not been. Yet he had been  
For Burton the man who knew his love,  
And loved him best, -- a lonely, living thing  
That had betrayed and saved him. He was gone,  
Also, and there was no more to be said.  
Of night and there was no more to be said,  
Of night, on either side. The same  
Of all that had ever over the other  
Was covered, sealed, and concealed in a grave,  
When for a moment he had never to live --  
That he who had never had and never had  
Might yet achieve."

THE NEW YORK TIMES, published in 1925, is the story  
of a man great in failure. In his youth, Burton had been  
lived that he was born to write a great work. He had  
listened, however, to the "dreams of death." After twenty  
years of melancholy, he had heard once again the "dreams of  
life," and had spent the last months of his life in writing  
them on the silver of the "Globe of God." His former  
dominance and authority, though now "disappeared,"



and shrunken," had yet "the presence in defeat," and

There was in the man  
With all his frailties and extravagances,  
The caste of an inviolable distinction.  
.....And there was in him always,  
Unqualified by guile and unsubdued,  
By failure and remorse, or by redemption,  
The grim nostalgic passion of the great  
For glory all but theirs.....  
.....And more than these,  
There was the nameless and authentic seal  
Of power and of ordained accomplishment." 1

DIONYSUS IN DOUBT, a volume of poems published in 1925, adds nothing to Robinson's reading of life. The title poem<sup>2</sup> and DEMOS AND DIONYSUS,<sup>3</sup> which are dissertations, almost diatribes, on Democracy's attempt to standardize a nation by law, lack timelessness.

A MAN IN OUR TOWN<sup>4</sup> is a further example of a humble man guided by the Light. He had a "homely genius for emergencies,"

"And though he be forgotten, it was good  
For more than one of you that he was here."

NOT ALWAYS I<sup>5</sup> tells of one who faltered in his lonely struggle, for it seemed as if

"he could see the last light going out  
Almost as if the fire of God had failed."

But finally new courage came, for

"out of silence came  
A song somewhat as of the morning stars."

KARMA<sup>6</sup> is an ironic picture of a man utterly devoid of light.

"Christmas was in the air and all was well  
With him, but for a few confusing flaws  
In divers of God's images. Because  
A friend of his would neither buy nor sell,  
Was he to answer for the axe that fell?

1. Collected Poems, page 957

2. Ibid., page 859

3. Ibid., page 904

4. Ibid., page 886

5. Ibid., page 887

6. Ibid., page 871







He pondered; and the reason for it was,  
Partly, a slowly freezing Santa Claus  
Upon the corner, with his beard and bell.

"Acknowledging an improvident surprise,  
He magnified a fancy that he wished  
The friend whom he had wrecked were here again.  
Not sure of that, he found a compromise;  
And from the fulness of his heart he fished  
A dime for Jesus who had died for men."

A CHRISTMAS SONNET,<sup>1</sup> "For One In Doubt," stresses again Robinson's belief in the survival of the ideal after life is done. In spite of the death of the Son of Man,

"Something is here that was not here before  
And strangely has not yet been crucified."

Therefore the ideal of "service and hope," and "love and brotherhood" need not be disavowed.

TRISTRAM,<sup>2</sup> published in 1927, contributes nothing to the sum total of Robinson's philosophy of life. On the other hand, CAVENDER'S HOUSE,<sup>3</sup> appearing in 1929, concerns the coming of light to a murderer. His retribution is not so described. Rather, in the Biblical phrase, "He came to himself." For, after twelve years of wandering, he decides to allow God's law and man's to exact their last full measure, and for the first time since the committing of the dread deed, he experiences a modicum of peace.

THE GLORY OF THE NIGHTINGALES, published in 1930, contains the old theme of the Light with an interesting variation.

"Some follow lights they have never seen,"<sup>4</sup>

1. Collected Poems, page 903

2. Ibid., page 595

3. Ibid., page 961

4. The Glory of the Nightingales, page 45



He pondered; and the reason for it was,  
Truly, a slowly growing sense of shame  
Upon the corner, with his heart and bell.

"Acknowledging an unrepentant surprise,  
He magnified a story that he wished  
The friend whom he had watched were here again.  
Not sure of that, he found a companion;  
And from the richness of his heart he tried  
A time for Jesus who had died for men."

A CHRISTIAN BORN, "For One in Christ," answered again Rob-

inson's belief in the revival of the ideal after life is

gone. In spite of the death of the Son of Man,

"Somehow, it is here that was not here before  
And strangely has not been troubled."

Therefore the ideal of "service and hope," and "love and

brotherhood," need not be dissolved.

THURMAN, published in 1929, contributed nothing to the

and total of Robinson's philosophy of life. On the other

hand, GAVINER'S NOVEL, published in 1930, concerns the coming

of light to a nation. His religion is not so described.

Rather, in the biblical phrase, "He came to himself," for

after twelve years of wandering, he decided to follow God's

law and man's to exact their last self message, and for the

first time since the coming of the great deed, he experi-

ences a religion of peace.

THE GLORY OF THE LITTLE WATERS, published in 1930, con-

tains the old theme of the fight with an interesting variation.

"Some follow lights they have never seen,"



says Nightingale,

"'And I was given a light that I could see  
But could not follow. There's the devil in that  
Always.'" 1

In his "'unfledged, omniscient years of youth,'" 2

"'there were premonitions, then, and warnings.  
I saw myself a part of a small world  
Of traps and lies and fights and compromises.  
.....I have not always loved  
Myself. I had enough of other vision  
To see the other side of selfishness,  
But I had not the will to sacrifice  
My vanity for my wits.'" 3

He became the great man of Sharon. He obtained all he asked of life until he fell in love with Agatha. She was won, however, by his best friend, Malory, a man of science. Years later Nightingale says to Malory:

"'you took everything there was  
Alive for me to live for. You had science,  
And I had nothing without Agatha.'" 4

A venom of which he had never before been aware took possession of him. When opportunity came, in his attempt to destroy Malory, he caused the death of Agatha. It is then that Malory turns his whole attention to science. Having achieved a measure of success, he returns to the town of his boyhood with the intent to kill first Nightingale and then himself. Finding, however, that nature has done the deed for him in making Nightingale a helpless invalid, he experiences a new and strange desire to live, with glimmerings which he thinks may be intimations of a coming light. To his great surprise Nightingale makes over to him his great house by the sea and a fortune, that he may apply his scientific knowledge to the

1. The Glory of the Nightingales, page 45

2. Ibid., page 50

3. Ibid., page 50

4. Ibid., page 60



say, Nightingale,

"And I was given a little that I could see  
But could not follow. There's the devil in that  
Always." I

In his "unfaded, magnificent years of youth,"

"There were premonitions, then and later,  
I saw myself a part of a small world  
Of things and life and light and darkness,  
Myself, I had enough of other vision  
To see the other side of hellishness,  
But I had not the will to sacrifice  
My vision for my life." I

He became the great man of the world. He obtained all he asked  
of life until he had believed with again. She was now, now-  
ever, by his best friend, Mary, a man of science. Years  
later Nightingale came to Mary;

"I had looked over the world  
Alive for me to have torn. You had science,  
And I had nothing without again." I

A person at which he had never before been aware took pos-  
session of him. When opportunity came, in his attempt to de-  
stroy Mary, he caused the death of Agatha. It is then that  
Mary takes his whole attention to science. Having achieved  
a measure of success, he returns to the town of his birth  
with the intent to kill first Nightingale and then himself.  
Finally, however, that person has done the deed for him in  
making Nightingale a helpless invalid. He experiences a new  
and strange desire to live, with circumstances which he thinks  
may be redemption of a sort. To his great surprise  
the electric wires over to him his great answer to the sea and  
fortune. That he may apply his scientific knowledge to the



saving of countless human lives.

Thus good came out of evil, because Nightingale belatedly followed his light. He says, before he kills himself:

"The ruin I made  
Is not all ruin, unless you make it so.  
But if you ask why Agatha was chosen  
To be the innocent means and sacrifice,  
You will ask more than me before you know!" 1

A new purpose gives direction to Malory's life.

"There was nothing left for Malory but remembrance  
Of the best that was behind him, and life struggling  
In the darkness of a longer way before him  
Than a way there was from anywhere to Sharon--  
A darkness where his eyes were to be guided  
By light that would be his, and Nightingale's." 2

To Malory, as to Lancelot, light is to come out of darkness.

Matthias in MATTHIAS AT THE DOOR, published in 1931, is much the sort of man that Nightingale might have become if "none had thwarted" him. None had thwarted Matthias. He had great possessions; he had won Natalie, who had married him without love; and at fifty he could complacently contemplate Garth as a human failure and not wonder at his self-inflicted death. When he suddenly learns that Natalie loves and has always loved Timberlake, and that Timberlake out of gratitude to Matthias for saving his life had made himself of no account in Natalie's eyes, his world crashes. After three years, when Matthias has become more beast than man, Natalie follows Garth through the door of death.

"Matthias, when he saw that Natalie  
Was dead, saw nothing else." 3

1. The Glory of the Nightingales, page 76
2. Ibid., page 83
3. Ibid., page 64



saying of countless human lives.

This good came out of evil, because his life had been

followed by his. He says, "He kills himself."

"With this I mean

is not all right, unless you make it so.

But if you say my friend was chosen

to be the innocent man and sacrifice,

You will see more of me before you know."

A new purpose, a new direction to his life.

"There was nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing

of the kind that was said, and the knowledge

in the heart of a man was something

that was there from the time he was born

A man was there with his eyes on the world

By light, dark, light, dark, light, dark."

To him, as to himself, I had to come out of darkness.

Matthew in MATTHEW AT THE DOOR, published in 1921, is

more the story of the man who had been chosen to

"none had started" him. None had started Matthew. He had

great possessions; he had a house, who had married him

without love; and as if he could completely compensate

for a man's failure and not wonder at his self-inflicted

death. Then the suddenly feeling that Matthew loved and was af-

ways loved himself, and that Matthew was not of Matthew's

Matthew for saying his life had made himself of no account in

Matthew's eyes, his world changed. After three years, when

Matthew had become more than man, Matthew follows (and)

through the foot of death.

"Matthew, when he saw that his life

was dead, was nothing else."

1. The story of the Matthew, page 70

2. Ibid., page 83

3. Ibid., page 84



Later was born in him a new pride of bitterness.

"And for Matthias pride was more than life.  
 .....He was proud  
 That he could meet with patience and high scorn  
 A life without a scheme and to no purpose--  
 An accident of nameless energies,  
 Of which he was a part, and no small part.  
 His blindness to his insignificance  
 Was like another faith, and would not die." 1

Then, to Matthias's great joy, Timberlake returns, broken in health. As he lies dying, he passes on to Matthias much that he has learned in his life--a life which was not worth much, yet worth more than Matthias could see.

"Do not ask me why so many of us  
 Are more like sketches of ourselves, half done  
 By nature and forgotten in her workshop  
 Than like a fair or tolerable fulfilment  
 Of her implied intention.....  
 I have found gold, Matthias, where you found gravel,  
 And I can't give it to you. I feel and see it,  
 But you must somehow find it for yourself.  
 .....There's a nativity  
 That waits for some of us who are not born.  
 Before you build a tower that will remain  
 Where it is built and will not crumble down  
 To another poor ruin of self, you must be born.  
 You are not old, Matthias; you are so young  
 That you see nothing in fate that takes away  
 Your playthings but a curse, and a world blasted,  
 And stars you cannot reach that have no longer  
 A proper right to shine." 2

After Timberlake's passing, Matthias also goes down to the door of death. Garth's voice, however, deters him from entering. He, like Garth, has failed, and

"having more  
 To fail with, failed more thoroughly and abjectly,  
 But that was not the end." 3

Nothing is wasted, though much is misused. As Matthias returns to life, he knows

1. Matthias at the Door, page 65  
 2. Ibid., page 78  
 3. Ibid., page 97



Later was born in him a new pride of bitterness.

"And for Mattie's pride was more than life.

..... He was proud

That he could meet with patience and high scorn

A life without a scheme and no purpose--

An accident of nameless energies,

Of which he was aware, and no small part.

His blindness to his insignificance

Was like another fall, and would not lie." I

Then, to Mattie's great joy, Timberlake returns, broken in

body. As he lies dying, he speaks on to Mattie with these

words. He has learned in his life--a life which was not worth much,

yet worth more than Mattie could see.

"Do not ask me why so many of us

Are more like creatures of instinct, half hope

By nature and forgotten in her workshop

Than like a fair or tolerable fulfillment

Of her implied intention.....

I have found gold, Mattie, where you found gravel,

And I don't give it to you. I feel and see it,

But you must somehow find it for yourself.

..... There's a mystery

That waits for some of us who are not born

Before you build a tower that will remain

When it is built and will not crumble down

To another foot of soil; you must be born

You are not old, Mattie; you are so young

That you see nothing in life that looks away

Your playthings out a tree, and a world classed

And even you cannot reach that have no finger

A proper right to shake it."

After Timberlake's passage, Mattie also goes down to the

door of death. Her voice, however, takes him from entrance

into the life of death, her fall, and

"I have more

To tell with, Mattie, more cheerfully and eagerly,

But I am not old."

Nothing is more, though much is missed. As Mattie returns

to life, he knows

I. Mattie at the door, page 30

2. Mattie, page 31

3. Mattie, page 32



"He must go back again, he must be born,  
 And then must live, and he who had been always  
 So promptly served, and was to be a servant,  
 Must now be of some use in a new world  
 That Timberlake and Garth and Natalie  
 Had strangely lived and died to find for him.  
 .....The night was cold,  
 And in the darkness was a feel of death,  
 But in Matthias was a warmth of life,  
 Of birth, defending and sustaining him  
 With patience, and with an expectancy  
 That he had said would never in life again  
 Be his to know. There were long hours to wait,  
 And dark hours; and he met their length and darkness  
 With a vast gratitude that humbled him  
 And warmed him while he waited for the dawn." 1

In this poem, as in so many others, light comes only after the destruction of a world. Natalie and Garth had no light to live by; Timberlake had a light which men could not see. Out of their lives, comes light to Matthias. He must be born again; he must build, upon the ruins of the old, a better and invincible self.

NICODEMUS, published in 1932, contains several notable long poems reiterating and emphasizing ideas so frequently expressed in earlier volumes. Since TALIFER, appearing in 1933, is a story pure and simple, NICODEMUS may be considered Robinson's latest published words in his "reading of life and character."

The title poem arrays before us Caiaphas, the high priest, smug, complacent, always right--with no light; Nicodemus, perplexed and harassed, seeing a light he has not courage to follow; and the lowly Carpenter, living in the Light and showing men the way from death to life. He holds His body as

1. Matthias at the Door, page 99



"The world is dark again, he must be born,  
 And then must live, and he must die,  
 So transiently arrived, and was to be a servant,  
 Thus, now he of some use in a new world  
 The Tiberian and Geth and Natalie  
 Had eternally lived and died to him.  
 ..... The night was cold,  
 And in the darkness was a feel of death,  
 But in Natalie was a vision of life,  
 Of birth, maturing and maturing him  
 With patience, and with an expectancy  
 That he had said would never in life again  
 Be his to know. There were long hours to wait,  
 And long hours; and he met their length and darkness  
 With a vast gratitude that reached him  
 And warmed him while he waited for the dawn."

In this poem, as in so many others, light comes only at  
 the moment of a world. Natalie and Geth and his light to  
 live by; Tiberian had a light which man would not see. Out  
 of their lives, comes light to Natalie. He must be born  
 again; he must build, upon the ruins of the old, a better and  
 livelier self.

NIGGERS, published in 1933, contains several a rather  
 long poem reflecting and emphasizing these as frequently ex-  
 pressed in earlier volumes. Since 1918, appearing in 1933,  
 is a story poem and simile, NIGGERS may be considered Rob-  
 son's latest finished work in his "writing of life and char-  
 acter."

The little poem strays before us Geth's, the high  
 widest, long, eloquent, always right--with no light; Nig-  
 gers, explained and harassed, "seeing a light he has not courage  
 to follow; and the lowly Carpenter, living in the light and  
 showing us the way from death to life. He holds his body as



but

"'an instrument whereon the spirit  
Plays for a time--and not for long.'" 1

Men may destroy it,

"'but it will not be dead  
.....because it is alive.'" 2

Therefore He can sit

"Alone in a dark room and not afraid." 3

NICODEMUS stresses the courage which comes from living  
in the Light--for out of the Light is born the conviction  
that the spirit outlasts the body and lives forever.

In TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE, the apostle of liberty to the  
black man knows, too, that his body will not die at Napoleon's  
hands. He realizes that he is

"A man betrayed, who sees his end a ruin,  
Yet cannot see that he has lived in vain." 4

For, he says,

"Napoleon cannot starve my name to death  
Or blot it out with his. There is an island  
Where men remember me, and from an island  
Surprising freight of dreams and deeds may come  
To make men think." 5

Here again is expressed confidence that man's work is not in  
vain.

Ponce de Leon, in the poem of the same name, has spent his  
life in an ignoble search for the fountain of youth. He has  
found neither the fountain nor any peace to attend him in his  
last hours. He finds comfort, however, in the presence of the

1. Nicodemus, page 5

2. Ibid., page 8

3. Ibid., page 13

4. <sup>1</sup>bid, page 28

5. Ibid., page 30



but

"I am interested in the spirit  
of the law, not the letter."

And my brother is

... because it is alive."

Therefore he can be

"There is a law, not a letter."

... because it is alive."

In the light of the law is not a revelation

that the spirit of the law is alive for ever.

In the light of the law, the spirit of the law is alive

... because it is alive."

... because it is alive."

"A man is not a man, but a man is a man."

Yes, he is.

"I am not a man, but a man is a man."  
On that it is all right. There is no law.  
There is no law, but there is a law.  
I am not a man, but a man is a man."

Here again is a question of the law, not of the man.

Yes.

There is a law, not a letter."

... because it is alive."

... because it is alive."

... because it is alive."

1. This is page 50  
2. This is page 51

1. This is page 50  
2. This is page 51  
3. This is page 52



wise old doctor, and tells him he is glad he never found the fountain,

"'For there is peace and wisdom in your eyes,  
And no fear for the end--which is worth more  
To me now than all fountains. Tell me something.  
Tell me--what does it mean?'" 1

The sage in answer tells of hidden voices which reside in some of humankind, and says:

"'I shall soon follow you,  
For I am old, too old to be afraid,  
Or to care tragically where or when--  
So long as there are voices.'" 2

De Leon replies:

"'I am glad your eyes are watching me,  
They say more than you have told me--  
.....I see more in them  
Than I can see in all the sixty years  
That I have lived. I don't say what it is.  
I don't know what it is and shall not ask--  
So long as it is there. It may be voices.'" 3

The old doctor recalls the apostle Paul in the serenity and trust with which he awaits the end of his life. Such trust is the fruit of listening always to the inner voices. The same idea is differently expressed in HECTOR KANE. Hector Kane is a man of eighty-five.

"To look at him was to believe  
That as we ask we may receive;  
Annoyed by no such evil whim  
As death, or time, or truth." 4

The old man says:

"'We die of what we eat and drink  
But more we die of what we think.  
For which you see me still as young  
At heart as heretofore.'" 5

In contrast to this is YOUNG GIDEON, which depicts the

1. Nocodemus, page 47  
2. Ibid., page 48  
3. Ibid., page 49

4. Ibid., page 68  
5. Ibid., page 70







fear and the feeling of impotency which besets modern youth. When the Voice for which Gideon has been waiting comes, he is afraid. He afterwards thinks he has gained courage, and "freedom rings through him like a bell." Yet, when the next morning he arises to look for the sign which God has promised, he finds himself even now

"Fearing to find the dew upon the fleece." 1

THE MARCH OF THE CAMERON MEN closes the volume with the tale of a man and woman who are ready, after a deed of guilt, to take the road of freedom--which is also the road of darkness--until the woman, yielding to her better nature, leads the way to the only freedom which remains. For, she says:

" 'I think that when a woman and a man  
Are on their way to make of their two lives  
Deliberate and ceremonial havoc,  
There's folly in going on if one of them  
Sees what's ahead, knowing the other sees it  
And shuts his eyes. I have paid once for ruin  
And once will do. I thought, before I thought,  
Before I knew, that I could see fair weather  
For you and me, and only friendliness  
In every natural sign that led me on--  
Till I found nature waiting like a fox  
For an unguarded pheasant.....  
Is it not better to be wise tonight  
And free tomorrow? To be wise and free  
Has always been a dream for most of us,  
And will remain a dream. Yet for a few--  
For you and me--it will be real and easy  
If we be ourselves.' " 2

The foregoing study establishes the fact of Robinson's belief in an inner power which renders man indomitable. This power, in a few instances described as Voices, is almost always

1. Nicodemus, page 65  
2. Ibid., page 86-7







alluded to as the Light. It is variously identified with faith in Self, faith in God, Wisdom, Knowledge, Thought, and Truth. It is the vision of the Ideal, or more simply stated, one's better nature. Some might call it the divine spark, but Robinson's emphasis seems not so much on a divinity towards which mankind aspires as on a humanity perfected from within. When, for instance, Arthur's knights set out on their quest for the Grail, "men saw themselves in each other as they might become."

With this Light is born a conviction that truth is eternal; that man's spirit does not die with his body, but lives on to a richer fulfillment, leaving, however, on earth the modicum of truth it has there earned. Such a conviction Robinson implies, rather than expresses. He never definitely answers his oft-recurring question: Are we created for nothing in an accidental, purposeless world? His only answer is another question: If so, why, after life's unnumbered tragedies, do we still aspire; why do we still follow the Light? For confidence in the Light never fails to beget courage to endure, to fall, and again to press on out of darkness.

Of the characters which Robinson examines some are dominated by the Light and are therefore in the true sense successful. Examples of such are:

Zola	Paul
Verlaine	John Brown
George Crabbe	Rembrandt
Thomas Hood	Washington
Vanderberg	A Man in our Town
Isaac and Archibald	Timberlake
Lincoln	The sage of Havana
Theodore Roosevelt	Toussaint L'Ouverture







Flammonde  
Old King Cole  
Lancelot

Galahad  
Captain Craig  
The Master

Others, having no Light, are failures, like

John Everldown  
Luke Havergal  
Bokardo  
Tasker Norris  
Avon

Gabrielle  
Natalie  
Garth  
Karma  
Napoleon

Still others have lights which they do not follow. Such are:

Merlin  
Fernando Nash  
Nightingale

Examples of men who at first had no Light, but later found it out of darkness are:

Bartholow  
Matthias  
Cavender

Although Robinson has said that he does not consider life a prison-house, he represents it as such for those without the Light. It is rather those who have the Light in varying degrees who resemble the bewildered infants in the spiritual kindergarten, trying to spell God with the wrong blocks. Though there is no real pessimism in this view, there is undeniably a bleakness. Verily the night is filled with sorrow and weeping, but it is courage which comes in the morning, rather than joy. Captain Craig alone seems to have found what he describes as that "Wiser kind of joy," which comes from "learning to laugh with God."

The only characters who approach Captain Craig's atti-



Calder  
Cassidy  
The Doctor

Thompson  
Old King Cole  
Lambert

Calder, Cassidy, The Doctor, The Doctor, The Doctor

Calder  
Cassidy  
The Doctor  
The Doctor  
The Doctor

Thompson  
Old King Cole  
Lambert  
The Doctor  
The Doctor

Still others have in this and they do not follow. But

But

Calder  
Cassidy  
The Doctor  
The Doctor

Excluded of the world of the Doctor, but I am

Excluded of the world of the Doctor, but I am

Calder  
Cassidy  
The Doctor  
The Doctor

Although Calder has said that he does not remember

like a dream-house, he represents it as such for those with

out the light. It is rather those who have the light in

which Calder has represented the bewildered light in the

spiritual light, trying to explain the light in the

light. Calder's view is no real picture in this view.

There is a certain light in the light. Very light is light

with Calder's view, but it is strange to see Calder in the

world, rather than the light. Calder's light is light

light that he represents as light "light" of light, which

comes from "light" to light and light.

The only characters who approach Calder's light



tude are three other old men, Hector Kane, the sage of Havana, and the apostle Paul; but they have won, after a life-long quest of the Light, not joy, but peace, fearlessness, and trust. Even with Paul this is less a trust in God than a faith in human destiny, for Robinson's God is God the Creator, rather than God a Ruler and Guide.

Strangely enough, or so it seems to me, Robinson never identifies his Light with the Christian's Light of the world, though he has made his two portraits of the Christ to me the most compelling of the whole range of his work. Only in CAPTAIN CRAIG does he counsel going to Nazareth to find the solution of the world's perplexities. In other poems his only answer to his questions, "Why are we here? Is life worth living?" is the peace and trust of those full of years who have long seen and followed the Light. May we not assume that they have found at least a few of the right blocks?



there is three other old men, Robert Kane, the son of Robert,  
and the daughter Paul; but they have won, after a life-long  
struggle at the light, not yet, but peace, happiness, and  
content. Even with this old man a fight is not a hard  
thing. It is a hard thing, but it is not a hard thing,  
rather than for a man and woman.  
Happily enough, or so it seems to me, Robert Kane  
is satisfied with the Christian's light of the world,  
though he has made his two principles of the Christian's light  
most completely of the whole range of his work. Only in 1848  
TAKE PRIZE does he connect with the Christian's light the so-  
lution of the world's problems. In other words his light  
has been his question, "Why are we here? Is this world  
right?" is the question and answer of those who have not  
have been seen and follow the light. May we not assume  
that they have found at least a few of the light's answers.



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